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POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC OPPRESSION IN BULGARIA UNDER COMMUNIST RULE

(Quoted from Basel National Zeitung)

The present members of the Bulgarian government have all been trained in the USSR, where they occupied various political and military positions. Chervenkov taught at the Communist Party School in Moscow; Foreign Minister Vladimir Poptomov was employed at AGITPROP (the agitation and propaganda section of the Comintern), held a responsible position in the NKVD, and was a close collaborator of Lozovski in Soviet trade-union organizations. Deputy Prime Minister Rayko Damyanov also lived for many years in the USSR, and Karlo Lukanov, chairman of the State Planning Commission, was a long-time delegate to the Moscow Soviet. Finance Minister Kiril Lazarov taught in Soviet colleges, and Dimo Dichev, chairman of the State Control Commission was cadre chief of the Comintern. Foreign Trade Minister Dimitur Ganev was a member of the Comintern secretariat; Minister of Construction Blagoy Ivanov was a high Soviet functionary; Minister of Health Petur Kolarov was a lieutenant colonel in the Red Army; Sava Ganovski, chairman of the Commission for Science, Art, and Culture, also held a high post in the Soviet bureaucracy; and Chief of Staff General Asen Grekov was a colonel in the Red Army.

With Chervenkov in power, the "old guard" of Communists is being consistently eliminated. Members of the latter comprise those Communists who stayed in the country during the war and the German occupation and who did not hold any posts in the Soviet government. Most of them were in prison during the occupation or were active in the underground; after 9 September 1944, they set up the Fatherland Front government. The antagonism between this group and the emigres who returned from the USSR was only latent as long as there was still a necessity to repulse jointly any opposition from the agrarian and socialist elements which still existed at that time.

The break with Tito precipitated the tension with the party; all "national" Communists were accused of being Tito sympathizers and were eliminated, leaving the Moscow Communists in sole power. Since the execution of Kostov and the death of Dimitrov and Kolarov, Chervenkov now faces only two major rivals: Anton Yugov and Dobri Terpeshev. Both were transferred to insignificant ministerial posts, Industry and Labor respectively; then they were openly accused by Chervenkov of collaborating with Kostov. As a result, Terpeshev was expelled from the

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Politburo and the same fate may await Yugov. Terpeshev, next to Kostov, had been the most popular among Bulgarian Communists and was highly praised for his heroic part in the underground movement; he was a favorite of Dimitrov, just as Yugov had been the most influential figure under Dimitrov's regime and even now commands a considerable following among the militia forces. In the recent purges, many prominent Communists were expelled from the Central Committee, such as Lt Gen Boris Kopchev, political commissar of the Army; Ivan Buchvarov, chairman of the Cooperative Union; former Finance Minister Vulko Kochev; Krustyu Stoychev, Communist Party secretary for Pirin Macedonia, and others. In all, 12 members of the Communist Party were expelled.

Thus Chervenkov succeeded in crushing all opposition to his policies and is now putting into practice the principles he represents, which may be expressed in brief as follows: only that is right which serves the USSR. Indeed, the welfare of the USSR is now the only standard of Bulgarian patriotism. Furthermore, Chervenkov proclaimed that the previous economic policy of the country had been wrong. At the Central Committee meetings of 15 and 17 January 1950, he announced that the main economic objective should not be electrification and industrialization, but the adaptation of Bulgarian economy to the needs of the USSR. This would mean that the country has to stop converting its resources into electric power and factories, and must direct all its efforts to agriculture and producing the raw materials to be furnished to the USSR. This seems to be confirmed by the fact that work on several electric power projects that were started in 1947 and 1948 has been stopped.

As far back as 1946, the USSR promised to furnish the equipment for one of the largest power projects, first named Traycho Kostov and later renamed Stalin; the first shipment, however, was received only in 1948 and consisted of old, British-made machinery which was no longer needed in the USSR. When the Bulgarians complained about this obsolete British machinery, they were told to erase the English names and markings. The large orders placed during 1946, 1947, and 1948 in Czechoslovakia likewise were delivered only in a small part.

Not a single large project was put into operation during 1949 and the first months of 1950; everybody in Sofia now knows that the high-sounding plans for the Bulgarian steel, cement, textile, and canning industries have been buried. Even the long-projected plant for agricultural machinery has not been completed. It is true that even without producing machinery, Bulgaria could easily obtain industrial products in exchange for its agricultural products; however, such export operations are forbidden by its Soviet sponsors and their Bulgarian helpers, who direct that export must be operated for the benefit of the USSR exclusively. The USSR sells Bulgarian products on the international market, insofar as it has no use for them. Bulgarian iron, tin, and zinc ores are shipped directly to the USSR, where they are processed. The uranium mines in Stara Planina, 40 kilometers from Sofia, are Soviet-owned; the ore is shipped in sealed cars, under guard of NKVD agents, direct to Stalin and from there by sea to Odessa, in regular weekly shipments. The same is true of the Dimitrovo coal mines, which are shipping their output to the USSR; the textile plants also are working exclusively with Soviet wool and cotton, and shipping the finished fabrics back to the USSR.

As to Bulgarian agriculture, two thirds of the tobacco crop is placed at the disposal of Soviet foreign trade; the remaining one third can be sold only with great difficulty, because Soviet agents underbid the prices on the international market. One of the most valuable export products, rose oil, is also exported by the USSR at a very low price; when the Bulgarians offered a small oil shipment to the US, after securing it at great effort from the Soviet agents, they were told that the latter had offered the product at a much lower price. Thus, rose cultivation in the famed Bulgarian Rose Valley is steadily declining as the prices paid by the government are so low that producers have lost all interest in raising the flowers.

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The USSR is the only country providing Bulgaria with industrial products on an exchange basis for raw materials; the USSR sells these raw materials for currencies on the international market and pays for them with products which it does not need, selling them to Bulgaria at very high prices.

The Bulgarian people have no interest in the struggle between the two Communist factions, and equally detest the national and Moscow brands of their oppressors, deriving only small satisfaction from the fact that the Communists fight and destroy each other. Generally speaking, the Bulgarian people are rapidly sinking into apathy and hopelessness. Fear and distress are the leading factors in their daily life. There is a constant fear of being deported to one of the numerous concentration camps throughout the country, the largest of which are located near Dimitrovo in Bogadanov Dol, where the inmates are forced to work as slaves in the Georgi Dimitrov coal mine. Another large camp has been established on a Danube island.

Hunger is also an ever-present companion, as food rations are entirely insufficient and unrationed goods are out of reach of the average citizen.

The working day of a woman worker in a textile plant usually lasts 10 hours. Since operations are mostly conducted on two shifts, every worker has 2 weeks of night shift and 2 weeks of day shift. Frequently work is extended to Sundays for the sake of "norm fulfillment." The women are paid 6,000 leva a month, but part of their wages may be deducted if the norm has not been fulfilled. Furthermore, 2,000 leva are withdrawn for the canteen service, where the workers are served the same meal day after day. An additional 450 leva go for the compulsory subscription to three Communist newspapers. After deducting expenses for rent, lighting, transportation, and a few other basic items, the amount left is hardly sufficient to buy a few rationed foodstuffs, and purchases on the "free market" cannot even be dreamed of. A kilogram of rationed bread costs 30 leva and 100 on the free market; a liter of rationed milk, available only for children and invalids, costs 100 leva; and a pair of children's shoes costs 6,000 leva.

The continuous struggle for subsistence leaves no time for political activity. That is one of the main reasons why there is no organized resistance to Communism, although the vast majority of the people in cities and rural areas heartily hate and despise their Communist masters and their Soviet overlords. Another reason for the lack of resistance may be seen in the complete annihilation of anti-Communist parties and organizations, and in the constant surveillance of the people by the Bulgarian and Soviet police. The people are well aware that the only relief they can expect must come from abroad, and all their hopes are directed toward the West. In this connection, the breaking of diplomatic relations between Bulgaria and the US was considered the first step taken by the West against Communist dictatorship, and aroused new hope in the Bulgarian people.

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